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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 080502Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 1128
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5164
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 2679
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3854
RHMFISS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU
RHMFISS/425ABG IZMIR TU//CC//
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA/DSCA//
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SUBJECT: ELECTRICITY TO NORTHERN IRAQ: IMPORT PERMIT
APPROVED, BUT TECHNICAL DELAYS KEEP POWER OFF

REF: ANKARA 172

11. (SBU) The Kartet electricity plant in Turkey that supplies electricity to northern Iraq ran out of fuel and shut down on January 2. The plant is fueled by Iraqi heavy fuel oil. As reported reftel, the final hurdle to getting fuel deliveries resumed and the plant restarted was issuance of an oil import permit by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Trade, which wanted Kartet to first amend its contract with Iraqi oil company SOMO. That amendment was delivered to Foreign Trade on February 5. We expected the permit would be issued on February 6 and fuel trucks would begin delivery to Kartet's plant the same day. However, despite Foreign Trade's approval of the import permit, computer problems have so far prevented Customs officials at the border from being able to call up the approved permit online. We expect this delay to be resolved in the next 24-48 hours.

12. (SBU) Kartet received the contract amendment from SOMO on February 4, and signed and delivered it to the MFA the same day. The document was delivered to Foreign Trade on February 5, with MFA's recommendation that Foreign Trade immediately issue the fuel oil import permit to Kartet. Foreign Trade officials met on February 6 and agreed to issue the import permit. The process of issuing the permit requires the Foreign Trade Exports Department to open documents in its computer system, approve them, and then forward the approved documents to Customs. Customs officials at Habur Gate border station can call up the documents online, see that they are approved, and clear the fuel trucks to cross the border. At least, that is how the system is supposed to work.

13. (SBU) However, despite repeated efforts over the past 24 hours, Customs officials at Habur Gate are still unable to call up any of the approved Foreign Trade documents online. Kartet officials tell us that they have personnel working directly with Customs and Foreign Trade, can see that officials in Ankara are authorizing documents online, but also can see that Customs officials at Habur cannot see these authorizations and will not let the trucks enter without them.

14. (SBU) Kartet officials say they are optimistic that these bureaucratic delays will be resolved in the next two days.

Foreign Trade called in their software vendor yesterday, but they have so far been unable to resolve the problem. In frustration, the Foreign Trade Agreements Division Director delivered a letter to Customs in Ankara at 1400 on February 7, saying that the Karetet import permit is approved and asking Customs to allow the fuel trucks to enter Turkey. However, as of 1700, Customs in Habur still had not received a copy of the letter.

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WILSON